

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th December 2013



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P R Barlow	Apologies	F Ricci	Apologies
C A Cadman	Yes	W J Rose	Yes
Dr R L Evans (Chairman)	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
P Horner	Yes	J S Sutton	Yes
S A Howell	Yes	J R Swift	Yes
R P Ramage	Yes		

All Cabinet Members were also in attendance for Agenda item 5, Scrutiny of the Priorities for 2014-15 and Initial Budget Position as follows:

Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council;
Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency;
Councillor Lady Newton, Cabinet Member, Planning and Property;
Councillor Schmitt, Cabinet Member, Place;
Councillor Siddall, Cabinet Member, Prosperity and Growth.

Apologies were received from Councillor Mitchell, Deputy Cabinet Member, Place.

The following members were also present: Councillors Abbott, Banthorpe, Canning, Cunningham, Galione, Johnson, Lager, McKee, Money, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Shute, Spray, Tattersley, and L Walters.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

- Councillors Cadman and Shelton declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda item 5, Scrutiny of the Priorities for 2014-15 and Initial Budget Position, as Council appointees to the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Advisory Committee.
- Councillors Butland declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda item 5, Scrutiny of the Priorities for 2014-15, and Initial Budget Position, as Chairman of a Parish Council in relation to a question which arose during debate.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all councillors remained in the meeting for all items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

27. **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

28. **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. **SCRUTINY OF THE PRIORITIES FOR 2014-15 AND INITIAL BUDGET POSITION**

INFORMATION: Committee members received a presentation from Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency, on the Council's Priorities for 2014-15 and Budget Position.

The slides presentation slides can be viewed at: <http://www.braintree.gov.uk/meetings>

Cabinet members provided the following information in response to questions raised by Committee members and other members present:

- The increase in allotment fees is relatively high in percentage terms only because it has a very low baseline. In overall terms, the cost of an allotment is still low. The introduction of a higher charge might encourage some who are not using their allotment site to give the site up for use by others;
- The Leader acknowledged that there is no mechanism for Members to propose small scale capital projects. He asked that officers write to all members inviting proposals for small scale capital projects in their wards;
- The Council's work with young people includes apprenticeships, Green Team Programme, developing a programme with partners to help young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and play areas for children;
- The Leader recognised the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's current scrutiny review of helping move young people who are NEET into Education, Employment or Training and looked forward to Cabinet receiving the report;
- It was recognised that accessing apprenticeships from rural areas is an issue. The Deputy Leader encouraged the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the issue in its review of helping young people who are NEET;
- Employee contributions to the Local Government Pension Fund had increased and are due to increase further;
- It had previously been announced that a reduction in Government grants would impact on funds given to the Localism Fund . However, Parish and Town Councils remained free to increase their own funds through increasing precepts if they wished;
- The Council is looking into moving from the banking service provided by the Cooperative Bank to an alternative provider. The Council does not use the Cooperative Bank for investments;

- Proposals are being developed with the aim of using funds from the New Homes Bonus to encourage leverage from other funds;
- Government proposals to top slice funds from the New Homes Bonus to Local Enterprise Partnerships is of concern to the Leader of the Council. If introduced, he would press for the funds to be spent in areas where they are raised;
- A report would be considered next year on the possible use of the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Examples of the Council working in shared services with other authorities included IT Services, Procurement Hub, North Essex Parking Partnership, Trading Standards and the lease on Causeway House to Essex County Council. Where opportunities arise, the Council remains interested in developing further shared services to reduce costs;
- Lloyds Bank had confirmed that it will be going ahead in working with the Council in the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme;
- A strategic review on the future of town centres would be considered next year. A Cabinet workshop being held in January would be considering town centre issues;
- Once built, the Cordons Farms Waste Facility will enable the Council to change its waste collection routes and to reduce costs;
- The reduction in contribution to Dedham Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project would bring the Council into line with other contributing authorities;
- The changes in Customer Services to service level agreement budgets for services provided at libraries will have no impact on customers;
- The future of the Mi Community Scheme will be reviewed in due course;
- The Ignite Business Service had been successful in generating new business in the district and is now in a breakeven position;

The Chairman thanked the Leader and Cabinet Members for their presentation and responses to questions asked by Members. The Chairman also thanked Members for their questions and officers for their support.

30. **DECISION PLANNER FOR THE PERIOD 1ST DECEMBER 2013 TO 31ST MARCH 2014**

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st December 2013 to 31st March 2014 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.53pm.

Dr R L Evans
Chairman